

# Völkerrechtsblog

Der Blog des Arbeitskreises junger Völkerrechtswissenschaftler\*innen

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SYMPOSIUM THE PROMISES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND SOCIETY

## “What’s law got to do with it?”

MICHAEL RIEGNER — 6 September, 2015



### Symposium “The Promises of International Law and Society”

When Richard Schwartz, co-founder of the Law and Society Association in the US, was invited to submit a part of his PhD on social factors in the development of legal control as an article to the Yale Law Journal, he himself wondered: “What’s law got to do with it?” Despite his doubts, the article became a classic in the by now well-established field of Law and Society research in the US, but the question will still resound with many on the continent in Europe: Research in law faculties is still largely doctrinal and positivist, and socio-legal studies are far from mainstream in publication

lists, job descriptions and the rolls of academic honor – a state of affairs that equally prevails in international law.

This however does not mean that the likes of Schwartz do not have their fellow travelers on the continent. In fact, a lot of socio-legal work is going on – just very often outside the law faculties. One rare exception is the Law and Society Institute at the law faculty of Humboldt University Berlin, which has been a forum for interdisciplinary legal research since it was founded in 2008 by, among others, Susanne Baer, now a justice at the federal constitutional court of Germany.

### **Law and Society in Berlin: The “Promises of Law” Conference**

This week, the LSI will become the gathering ground for one of the largest meetings of socio-legal researchers on the continent to date: More than 300 legal sociologists, anthropologists, ethnologists and other researchers will come together at Humboldt University for what is likely the closest match on the European continent to the annual “Law and Society” meeting in the US. Growing out of associations of legal sociologists in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the conference “Promises of the Law” will cover topics as diverse as empirical studies into law and asylum, law and development, transitional justice, constitutional adjudication, indigenous peoples’ rights and the biopolitics of reproductive rights.

Völkerrechtsblog will accompany the conference with a special symposium on “The Promises of International Law and Society”. Presenters from the conference will give us a virtual taste of their arguments and discuss them not only

with their audience in Berlin, but also with the readers here on the blog. Readers are invited to join the debate and discuss the many ways in which social context shapes the law, and vice versa. Diverse as the topics will be, socio-legal perspectives are sure to bring home one common point: law’s got a lot to do with it.

All posts in this series *can be accessed [here](#)*.

*Michael Riegner*

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